

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for controlling access to a functional unit within a set top
2 box, comprising:

3 receiving first information comprising a plurality of functional unit
4 identifiers and one or more tier requirements respectively related to each functional unit
5 identifier;

6 receiving second information comprising tier rights;
7 correlating the functional unit identifiers to their respective tier
8 requirements;

9 interacting with the functional unit;
10 determining if the respective tier requirements are satisfied by the tier

11 rights; and

12 authorizing further interaction with the functional unit.

1 2. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, further comprising receiving third information that replaces the tier
3 rights.

1 3. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, wherein more than one of the tier rights could authorize further
3 interaction with the functional unit identifier.

1 4. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, authenticating a source of at least one of the first and second
3 information.

1 5. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, wherein the functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising
3 at least one of software, hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.

1 6. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, further comprising receiving a plurality of streaming content
3 functional units.

1 7. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the
2 set top box of claim 1, wherein the set top box is integral with an enclosure for a display.

1 8. A conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units, comprising:
3 a set top box;
4 a functional unit associated with the set top box;
5 a requirements message comprising a functional unit identifier and one or
6 more tier requirements related to the functional unit identifier, wherein the functional unit
7 identifier is associated with the functional unit;
8 a rights message comprising one or more tier rights; and
9 an authorization function that compares each of the one or more tier
10 requirements against the one or more tier rights in order to authorize use of the functional
11 unit.

1 9. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, further comprising an authentication function that authenticates a source
3 of the rights and requirements messages.

1 10. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a data channel between a headend and the set top box,
3 wherein the data channel is one of bi-directional and omni-directional.

1 11. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a second rights message to replace the tier rights.

1 12. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a plurality of streaming content functional units sent
3 from a headend to the set top box.

1 13. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, wherein the functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising at
3 least one of software, hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.

1 14. The conditional access system for controlling access to functional
2 units of claim 8, wherein the set top box is integral to an enclosure for a display.

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1 15. A method for controlling access to remotely-located and functional
2 units within a conditional access system, comprising:

3 determining first and second information to modify authorization of a
4 remotely-located and functional unit;

5 sending the first information comprising a functional unit identifier and at
6 least one tier requirement related to the functional unit identifier;

7 sending the second information comprising a tier right; and

8 causing modification of an authorization state of the remotely located
9 functional unit corresponding to the functional unit identifier.

1 16. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising:

3 sending third information comprising a replacement tier right; and

4 causing further modification of the authorization state of the remotely-
5 located and functional unit corresponding to the functional unit identifier.

1 17. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein the
3 authorization state is one of authorized and unauthorized.

1 18. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising
3 generating a signature over at least one of the first and second information.

1 19. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein more than one
3 tier right could authorize use of the remotely-located and functional unit corresponding to
4 the functional unit identifier.

1 20. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising
3 sending a plurality of streaming content functional units to a remote location.

1 21. The method for controlling access to remotely-located and
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein the remotely-

- 3 located and functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising at least one of software,
- 4 hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.

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